Tirumala Naik, the Portuguese and the Dutch

BY

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Tirumala Naik, the Portuguese and the Dutch.

[By Mr. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, M. A.]

Of all the Naik rulers of Madura, Tirumala is the best remembered. The city of Madura, more particularly the celebrated temple of Minakshi and the Palace, are enduring monuments of the religious zeal and the practical efficiency of this great ruler. The chronicles are unanimous that he came to the throne in 1623, though a contemporary Jesuit letter states that Tirumala died in 1659 after a reign of thirty years, which would put his accession six years later than the chronicles. His kingdom comprised the extremity of the peninisula—roughly Salem and Trichinopoly and the country south of it.

My object is to study briefly the relations of this ruler with the European trading companies, especially the Portuguese and the Dutch—a subject not adequately treated in the otherwise excellent account of the reign of Tirumala Naik in Mr. R. Satyanatha Aiyar's *Nayaks of Madura*.* During Tirumala's reign the Portuguese power in India was on the decline, and the Dutch were beginning to put forth strong efforts to drive the Portuguese out of Ceylon and the Madura Coast.

Tirumala himself was evidently a realist in politics. Sentiment had little influence on his actions and he was ever ready to follow the course that, in the given circumstances, seemed most convenient to him. His relations with the Karnataka empire to which he owed allegiance *de jure* and with the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda are not easily explained otherwise. His relations with the European companies were also regulated by the same rule of practical convenience or necessity.

The Dutch at first turned their attention primarily to Sumatra and Java in the early years of their enterprise in the East, and it was some years before they turned their attention to the Coromandel cost, and still later before they concentrated on Ceylon and the Madura coast. But from the first they treated the Portuguese as enemies and levied relentless war on them.† A close examination of the affairs of the Portuguese in India by one of their viceroys showed that in 1623 they were in a very bad state and in no condition to resist the growing aggressions of the Dutch.‡

Another Viceroy lamented in 1636 that the Indian 'trade had fallen into the hands of the Dutch' and that 'whereas India might have been the brightest jewel in the Portuguese crown, all her forts were in a state of decay.§' Two years later, in 1638, the Portuguese Viceroy in India wrote to his king in great detail about the very flourishing condition of the Dutch factories and trade in the Bay of Bengal, in the kingdoms of Golkonda, Bijapur and Vijayanagar, in the provinces of the Mughal empire, and in Persia, the straits of Mecca and many islands in the Eastern Seas.||

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* *The Madras University Historical Series, II* (1924).
† Danvers: *Report*, page 21.
‡ *Ibid*, page 27.
§ *Ibid*, pages 39-40.
|| *Ibid*, page 42.

The Portuguese, however, did make one last effort to retrieve their position and sought to attack the Dutch factory at Pulikat in 1635 with the assistance of the 'Raja of Bisnagar'; two expeditions were led, but on both occasions the Raja did not cooperate,* and the Portuguese gained nothing. In fact so low had their fortunes fallen, that about the same time the Jesuits settled on the Madura coast at Tuticorin persuaded the Naik of Madura, obviously Tirumala, to seize one of the Portuguese agents who had been sent there to 'purchase saltpetre in exchange for elephants'; and though no details are forthcoming, we learn that the Portuguese sought to teach a lesson to the Jesuits and the Naik in between their two futile expeditions to Pulikat.†

A war broke out two years later between Tirumala Naik and his feudatory Dalavay Setupati of Ramnad. Unfortunately we seem to lack all direct means of obtaining a clear knowledge either of the occasion for the war‡ or of the exact part played in it by the two European powers. Nelson remarked that the Setupati is said to have 'procured the assistance of a number of Europeans who came from Ceylon and Cochin in five vessels. The only direct evidence of this fact, is a statement in a poem called *Ramappayya*, noticed by Mr. Taylor and by Prof. Wilson in his descriptive catalogue'.§

The poem mentioned by Nelson is the ballad known under the name of *Ramappayyan Ammanai*, which is now being examined and edited by Rao Saheb S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Reader in Tamil in the University of Madras. The poem is anonymous, but apart from obvious exaggerations and other popular features, its evidence must be accepted as satisfactory, as it bears on the face of it all the marks of a more or less contemporary account. But the poem does not support Nelson's statement. The aid of Parangis (Portuguese) was invoked by Ramappayyan himself; || they were ready to give it, because they had a grievance against the Setupati for his obstructing the passage of their vessels in the Pamban channel, and Ramappayyan promised to give them the freedom of the channel as well as the entire island of Rameswaram in case they helped him to win the war. But the help of the Portuguese was not of great avail as they were defeated in more than one engagement by the general of the Setupati. There is no reason to think that the Dutch took any part in this war notwithstanding what has been stated to the contrary by Nelson and those who have followed him like Rea¶ and Satyanatha Aiyar. The Dutch records know nothing of it.

Danvers cites Portuguese sources and says that 'in consideration of the assistance sent to him when he wished to take Marava', the Naik of Madura 'undertook to give the king of Portugal a fortress in Pampa, called Uthear, or wherever he might desire one,........ also build at his own expense a church at Ramanacor (Ramnad), and seven churches between Bamban (Pamban) and Tomddy (Tondi). The Naik also gave permission to all those who might desire it to become Christians,

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Ibid, pages 52-53.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Contrast* Nelson, *Madura country,* page 128 with R. Satyanatha Aiyar, *Naiks of Madura,* page 122.

§ *Op. cit.,* page 129. Neither Taylor nor Wilson gives the fact noticed by Nelson.

|| *Ammanai,* 11. 1482-1567.

¶ *Monumental Remains of the Dutch,* page 8.

and promised to furnish gratuitously to the king of Portugal all the assistance he might require for Ceylon, both in men and supplies. He further undertook not to be friendly to the Dutch, nor to permit them in his territories, whilst his vessels would also not be permitted to visit Dutch port.*'

But the Naik's friendship and support meant little for the Portuguese who are at the end of their resources, and whose 'trade with the South was now reduced to being carried on in rowing vessels, which could more easily escape the enemy's ships.'† In the course of a few years, Tirumala Naik realised that without the aid of the Dutch company, it was not po ssible to develop the maritime trade of his country. He saw what was happening in other parts of Southern India where the rulers of Goloconda and Karnataka, of Gingee, Malabar and Ceylon were offering attractive terms to the Dutch and encouraged their settlements and trade in the countries under their rule. In 1644 A. D., Arnold Heussen, the Dutch Governor of Pulikat was also planning in his turn to secure a settlement in the kingdom of Madura, for he expected to be able to get many articles of trade, including slaves, at better prices there than in the territory of Gingee. So when Tirumal Naik sent an embassy to him inviting the Dutch to come and start a factory in his country, an agreement was easily reached and its terms are set forth in a cowl granted by Tirumala in June 1645, received at Pulikat on the 10th July and preserved in a word for word Dutch translation.‡ The Dutch were to be free to build factories, house merchants, factors, writers, soldiers and servants, and buy and sell freely in all places in the territory of the Naik. They were to pay half the ordinary rates of toll on all incoming goods, and three-quarters on outgoing articles, subject to the understanding no toll should be paid on goods re-exported because they could not be sold. The officers of the Naik were not to molest or hinder the Dutch traders and their operations. No other European nation, Portuguese, English or Danes, shall be given any privileges in the Madura kingdom which would injure or obstruct those enjoyed by the Dutch. Trade for cash or by barter is allowed for all goods. The Dutch shall enjoy a preferential claim to all debts owing to them from the merchants of the country. No tolls shall be levied on gold, silver, precious stones, silk stuffs and other things meant for presentation. No rights shall be claimed to wreckages and all help will be rendered for salvage whenever necessary. In case of war against the other European nations, the Dutch shall be free to render assistance or not as they chose and to carry on their trade. The cowl was attested by the Naik with his own 'hand of sandal'.

As a result of this agreement, a Dutch factory was established at Kayalpatnam towards the end of 1645 by Arent van der Meijde. It flourished very well, and very soon the Dutch became so powerful on this coast that van der Meijde felt justified in interferring with and regulating the working of the pearl fisheries in the neighbourhood. This naturally brought on a collision with the Portuguese who had been settled for over 120 years in Tuticorin and claimed special rights both over the Christian population of the Paravar fishermen and over the Madura-Tinnevelly coast. Acco ding to Dutch authorities, they not only captured a small vessel

* *Report*, pages 43-44.
† Danvers' Report, page 43.
‡ No. 170 Heeres: I, pages 455--57. It is dated Parthiva Jyestha, full moon day corresponding to 30th May 645, according to *Indian Ephemeris* of Swamikkannu Pillai.

(toni) of the Dutch laden with merchandise, but successfully induced the Naik to issue orders that the Dutch should be driven out of Kayalpatnam with all marks of ignominy. This actually happended in June 1648 when the Dutch factors of Kayalpatnam just found it possible to escape with their lives to Galle in Ceylon. A punitive expedition to avenge this wrong became necessary, and the task was entrusted to John Maetsuycker, the Governor of Ceylon, who carried out the order in February 1649. He led a force of 436 Europeans and 170 or 180 Sinhaleese in a fleet of ten ships which left Negombo on the 2nd and anchored before Manapaar on the 6th. Starting from there on the 8th the small squadron stopped at a place between Virampatnam and the temple of Tiruchendur, where there was a good landing place. The landing on the 9th was unopposed and the town of Tiruchendur was occupied the same day. The next day a part of the force went to Virampatnam and occupied the Roman Catholic church in the place from which the priest had fled. The invaders learnt there that all the persons in Kayalpatnam who had a share in the *anti*-Dutch demonstrations of the preceding year had sought refuge in flight. The people who stayed behind were not unfriendly, and it was not possible to wage war against them. The invaders took up their headquarters within the pagoda of Tiruchendur, which they fortified and armed with artillery, and made a demonstration of their power by marching along the entire coast. The people shuddered at the military occupation of the famous shrine, but all their protests went unheeded and the invader persisted in his unholy design. The Naik sent a message that reparation would be made for the damage of the preceding year, if the Dutch would relinquish the temple ; this too produced no effect.

Tuticorin, the Portuguese centre on this coast, naturally attracted the particular attention of the invader who reached the place on the 12th February. The Portuguese captain had sent a letter to Maetsuycker telling him that the Paravas were under the special protection of the King of Portugal ;* the Dutchman's answer was that he had come to avenge the wrong of the previous year and that he considered the Paravas as only the subjects of the Naik. But here again, most of the Portuguese and the Parava chief had fled, and the rest, who were quite friendly in their behaviour to the Dutch, threw the blame on the Captain and the others that had fled. Maetsuycker proclaimed that while he would not cause trouble to unarmed people, he expected to be paid a contribution of 40,000 reals in three days ; the ‘ Moors ’ (Muslims) were excluded from this levy as they had always been friendly to Dutch commerce and had also been particularly helpful in this punitive expedition. The principal inhabitants of the place including the Catholic priests found themselves compelled to give a written undertaking accepting on behalf of the Naik of Madura the levy and the time limit for its payment under threat of a complete destruction of the churches and houses in Tuticorin. This agreement, originally drawn up in Portuguese, is available in a Dutch translation in Heeres' collection.† But by the 14th February, only 5,463 reals had been paid, and it was observed that the people were preparing for resistance by erecting barricades and arming themselves. The city was then given up to plunder for a day, but not much was got thereby. Hostility continued for some days, but nothing could induce the people to pay up, for in the absence of the chief men who

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* Holland and Portugal were then at peace ; but the Dutch did not allow this to intefere with the execution of their plans against the Portuguese. Danvers : *Report*, pages 44, 46-47.

† No. 185, Vol. I, pages 510-11.

had fled, they were not in a position to do so. Not all the threats and violence of the invader could alter the situation in the least, and news was received that the pagoda of Tiruchendur was being attacked, and the small guard the invaders had left there exposed to danger. Maetsuycker had to content himself with another paper agreement executed by the Captain of Tuticorin and others on the 18th February.* This document recalls the agreement of the 12th February with an inneudo against the allegations made by the invader about the occurrences of the preceding year; it then recounts that it was not possible to raise so large an amount in so short a time in the absence of chief citizens of the place and that in consequence an extension of time to the end of May had been granted by the invader, and concludes with a promise to pay within the new time limit agreed upon; all hostilities to cease meanwhile on either side. All the same the houses of the Parava chiefs called Pattangatis were set on fire as a punishment to those who were believed to have been the cause of the trouble in Kayalpatnam in the previous year.

Meanwhile the Naik wrote to the Dutch governor and the people of the coast to make it up between them elves and not carry on war, and sent word to the former to go back Tiruchendur by boats to avoid any possible land attacks *en route*. He took the hint and caught hold of some boats lying in Tuticorin, promising to return them when the levy of 40,000 reals should be paid up, and sailed on the 20th to Tiruchendur which he reached the same evening.

On the 22nd the people of Kayalpatnam turned up and began negotiations in the name of the Naik of Madura for the restoration of the Tiruchendur temple. Maetsuycker replied by making a modest demand of 100,000 reals as costs and damages to be paid to him before he left the pagoda, and of a fresh contract restoring the old trading privileges in Madura country. The representatives of the Naik insisted on the pagoda being vacated first and pointed out the enormity of the offence to the sentiments of the people caused by their desecration of their great shrine, and wound up by offering to give compensation for the actual damage done to goods and merchandise last year together with a new trading factory. As no agreement could be reached, negotiations broke off, and the Dutch prepared for defence. But once more on the 23rd the Adigar of Tiruchendur resumed negotiations which produced no better results. Meantime the people had made large preparations for storming the temple. Reinforcements also began to arrive and a report reached the Dutch Governor from one of his outposts that four to five hundred men, 4 elephants and 50 or 60 horses had been assembled by the enemy.

There was an engagement on the 25th resulting in a loss of 30 men for the Madura army, the casualty in the Dutch forces being one dead and two wounded, all Sinhalese. As a result of it, the town was searched by the Dutch and all the powder they discovered was rendered useless; and many works of art were also destroyed or damaged. The people became so afraid that they dared not even remove their dead.

But the Dutch gained little by their small successes except the hatred of the local people. And Maetsuycker finding that he could not do much resolved on the 28th to leave for Negombo. He wrote to the Naik on the 1st March reminding him

**Ibid*, pages 512-13. The original was in Latin. I follow Heeres' Dutch version.

that he had himself invited the Dutch some years before to come and trade in his country, and then, for no fault of theirs, done them great damage; he had occupied the pagoda of Tiruchendur for his security and would restore it intact the moment the Naik made reparation for the wrong. Having despatched the letter, he embarked taking with him the idoles of the temple, they included the chief stone icon in the garbhagriha also, as security for the amounts due to him from Madura.

There was some indecisive fighting after the departure of Maetsuycker. The Dutch must have left Tiruchendur soon after, but there seems to be no distinct record of this.

The War had cost the Dutch f.12,289; they got a booty of f. 23,093, thus recovering f. 10,804 of the losses at Kayalpatnam that were estimated at f. 28,000.

In January 1650 Maetsuycker made another attempt to collect 30,000 reals still unpaid of the contribution he had levied on Tuticorin; his men were asked about the images from Tiruchendur and were promised a restoration of their trading privileges if the images were restored; but of the payment of the balance of the levy, they heard not a word.

In February it was the turn of the Madura authorities to seek to recover the Tiruchendur images. On the 11th of that month Vadamalaiyappa, the lieutenant of Tirumala Naik in the Tinnevelly district, wrote to the Adigar of Kayalpatnam, Narayana Mudaliar, instructing him to send four persons to Gale to get back the images which were still with the Dutch. The men were sent with a promise in the name of the Naik that when the images were restored, the Dutch would be compensated for the losses they had suffered. The Dutch governor wrote back saying that the images would be returned on payment of 100,000 reals.

This stalemate was ended by a letter dated 10th May 1650, to Batavia in which the Dutch Govenor of Ceylon asked for instructions regarding the disposal of the images; the Batavian authorities answered that he might surrender 'the stone image with its dependents' to the Naik of Madura for what he could get for them and then get from him what advantages he could obtain for the company for building factories and carrying on trade. As a result of these orders, the images were sent to the governor of Ceylon to Kayalpatnam towards the end of January 1651.

Vadamalaiyappa, the officer of Tirumala in charge of the Tinnevelly area, is well known in Tamil literature as the patron of several temples in the eastern part of the district, and there is a whole poem bearing the name Vadamalaivenba in which he is often referred to as Kavai-Vadamalai, from the place of his birth, Kavanur near Madura. There are inscriptions in Tiruchendur and elsewhere bearing witness to the liberal patronage of temples by this official, and the one at Tiruchendur dated 1653 may be taken to commemorate his renovation and re-consecration of the temple after the recovery of the images from the Dutch. It may be noted in passing that the author of the Tamil *Matsya Puranam* was the grandson of this official and was known as Irasai Vadamalaiyappa Pillai. Several writers have confused the two Vadamalaiyappas.

To resume the story of the relations between Tirumala Naik and the Dutch. After their unfortunate experiences in the Madura kingdom, the Dutch left it alone

for sometime, and concentrated on Ceylon. Within a few years, however, the celebrated Ryklof van Goens became governor of Ceylon and made a determined effort to put an end to the last vestiges of Portuguese power on the Madura coast and in the neighbouring seas. He captured Tuticorin at the end of January 1658 with almost no resistance from the Portuguese, and before he proceeded against Mannar and Jaffna where the Portuguese had concentrated their strength, he sought and gained the alliance of the Setupati Ranganatha Tevar. The alliance concluded on the 10th February 1658* included was directed particularly against the Portuguese stipulated for full mutual freedom for trade in one another's territories, and allotted seven *tonis* (small boats) to the Dutch in the pearl-fisheries just as the Portuguese used to have before. Before the end of June 1658 Van Goens succeeded in capturing Mannar, Kays and Jaffnapatnam.†

Partly as a result of their alliance with the Setupati, but more perhaps in consequence of the decisive successes they had won against the Portuguese, the Dutch found it easy to enter into negotiations once more with Tirumala Naik and his lieutenant Vadamalaiyappa Pillai, and there are two documents‡ which enable us to follow the course and results of these negotiations. After his first experiences Tirumala had naturally learnt to be careful with the Dutch, and was not over ready to grant their requests. The first of the two documents just mentioned is a letter from Vadamalaiyappa Pillai dated 18th March 1659 proposing terms to governor Adrian van der Meijden. The other contains the terms sanctioned by the Naik himself after further negotiations and is dated in the same month (Panguni of the Vilambi year in the Tamil calendar) as the preceding document. These terms deserve a somewhat detailed notice as they set forth both the demands of the Dutch and the actual sanctions accorded by the Naik. It opens by declaring the mutual desire of the parties for perpetual alliance and friendship and their willingness to treat the enemies of either of the parties as enemies of the other. Then the Dutch demand for permission to construct a fort is dealt with. The Naik pointed out that the Portuguese who were there for over a hundred years never wanted this; the Dutch answer was that it was not a fort, but only a small place of safety for themselves that they wanted; the Naik will not say yes to this at once, but will consider it on some future occasion. The Dutch will have the same jurisdiction over the Paravas, Pattangattis and Christians as the Portuguese had before, saving the Naik's rights to tribute from them. The Dutch still claimed the arrears of the old levy on Tuticorin and neighbouring places; the Naik says that all old claims and injuries should be forgotten and dropped on both sides. The Dutch wanted that no pearl or chank fishing on the coast was to be permitted without their consent; the Naik said that none was to engage in this occupation without the consent both of the Naik's agents and the company's officers. The Dutch wanted an exclusive monopoly of the trade in the Madura coast; the Naik pointed that that would lead to trouble with other European nations, but he would not give other nationalities permission to build lodges or factories in his territory. The Dutch were to enjoy freedom to trade in all articles including pepper. Their demand for their trade being toll free for three years was, however, turned down, and they were required to pay half-toll as before. The subjects of the Naik were

* Heeres-Stapel No. 223, (ii), pages 113-14.
† *Ibid* Nos. 224-6, give the terms on which the surrender of these places was made.
‡Nos. 235 and 236 in Heeres-Stapel, (ii), pages 142-9.

not to narrete the coasts of Ceylon without the permission of the Dutch. The Dutch wanted that all merchants under their jurisdiction should be free from molestation and that they should get a lease of all the sea ports in the country ; the first part of this request was granted, and the second naturally disallowed. The Dutch had demanded lastly that their servants should be free to carry on trade in the Madura country and that the Naik should claim no rights on ships accidently stranded or wrecked on his coasts ; the Naik's answer to this demand was that the servants of the Dutch company would be free to carry on the Company's trade in his lands, and that rights over wrecked and stranded craft will be regulated by the rule of reciprocity.

Alexander Hamilton* gives the following estimate of Dutch policy in India : 'that honest Company has always had a Maxim, first to foment Quarrels between *Indian* Kings and Princes, and then piously pretend to be Mediators, or Arbitrators of their Differences, and always cast in something into the Scale of Justice to those whose Countries produce the best Commodities for the Company's Use, and lend the Assistance of their Arms to him who is so qualified by the Product above mentioned, and, at the Conclusion of the War, make the poor conquered Prince pay their Charges for assisting the Conqueror ; and, when all is made up, and Treaties of Peace ready to be signed, then the Conqueror, their dear Ally and Friend, must suffer them to possess the best Sea-ports, and fortify the most proper and convenient Places of his Country, and must forbid all Nations Traffick but their dear *Dutch* Friends, under Pain of having the Company's Arms turned against them, in Conjunction with some other potent Enemy to the deluded Conqueror'. Tirumala Naik, who lived a generation earlier than Hamilton's time, evidently had the same opinion of the Dutch as the shrewd Scotch adventurer who spent many years in the East.

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*A New Account of the East Indies, I, page 186.

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